

The Stroke of a Pen

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Summary: Marked on a person's wrist, as if handwritten with love, is the true name of their soulmate. It's a concept so ludicrous to the prince, and yet proof is staring at him in the form of symbols etched on his skin. It was strange enough that he was reborn in an anime, now this? Magical tattoos of your destined one? Why was this never shown in canon? A Rewind AU oneshot.

The Stroke of a Pen

_AN: **THIS IS AN AU (or universe alteration, really) OF REWIND. **So if you haven't read it, please read it first to be less confused. The story is pretty much the same except for two things: soulmates is a thing, and OC!Atem had kept most of his past life's knowledge a secret because of the resulting culture of secrecy the whole soulmate thing had. _

This is basically a bonus story, a what-if in my other strange brainchild, and a play with a popular plot device/trope in many fanfictions I've read.

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><p>When he had been reborn, he did not think any other strange and fantastical things would pop in his second life. Being reincarnated still sent him in a state of disbelief at times, living in Ancient Egypt would always be a strange concept (and achievement) for him, and having been born as a protagonist of a popular anime is something that was very hard to swallow.<p>

But as he stared at the symbols etched on his right wrist, he supposed they were tame compared to this weird rule of life in this world.

Soulmates.

It was something out of a cheesy romance plot in novels and movies,

it was something he strictly considered in fiction. In his past life, he had read numerous ways on how bonds between soulmates could work, often in fanfiction. Markings etched on their bodies, spikes of emotions they feel on the other end, a song they hear as they first meet, a spark perhaps, or even a timer to show when they will meet at last. Three, two, one, here's your other half.

It was a cute idea, an interesting concept, a romantic plot, and a possibility for heartache. Lovers that want to be together but can't, enemies that hate each other (and yet), one-sided bonds, maybe even multi-sided ones. Something that never existed in his old world, it was a ridiculous thing to believe possible. Love is a choice, after all. People can change, people can decide who they wish to love. People can love other people equally and fiercely, be it platonic or romantic.

Yet in this world, it seems people are born with a soulmate. Another half, your one, your true love. A person who's the most important in their life. Gag him with a spoon, please. It baffled him, the skeptic in him questioned the marks on his wrist. Despite seeing his father summon creatures out of thin air, despite seeing the priests perform amazing magical feats, the small elegant script on his wrist was just too much for him to handle. It felt like destiny, it felt like fate.

And he liked neither.

(for if it was his fate to follow the anime, then he'd rather fight it than go along with it)

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><p>But given the name on the wrist, he supposed fate can't be that much of an asshole.<p>

* * *

><p>It's etiquette to cover the name on the wrist, it's a private thing. Most cover it with cloth, or a leather strap. Royalty stepped it up a notch and used bracelets made of gold and silver. It's an unwritten rule, practiced by everyone regardless of social class or ethnicity. Don't let anyone see besides the owner of that name. You could be naked but that part of the wrist should always be protected. You could be completely covered like a mummy, but if a stranger can read the name on your wrist, you might as well have been dancing around naked.<p>

It's a bit confusing, for if people truly want to find their soulmates, why make the search harder by covering the names?

He concludes that people can be weird, and that society could make silly and overcomplicated rules.

* * *

><p>He asked his father once if mother was his soulmate. He said no. The surprise in his face must have been palpable, because his father laughed and ruffled his hair.<p>

"Perhaps it's time to stop listening to the tales of love-struck

servants and young priests, and start listening to people who have already found the owner of their marks," he suggested wryly, gesturing him to sit beside him. He complied, fascinated at this new discovery. "Your mother and I met, we became friends, we grew closer, and we fell in love. You don't need to be soulmates to do that."

That's not what most people think.

"What happens to the majority does not mean it will happen to all," his father chided, reading the scrunched up expression he was wearing. "A soulmate is balance, they are there to ground you when you fly too high and to pull you up when you fall. Becoming lovers is a possibility, but never the result."

It made some sense, he supposed. It was much better than thinking a soulmate as your only true love. He asked if his father did find his soulmate. He said yes, and added that he saw him often in his court. His father never told him the name, and he knew better not to ask. Secrecy was a very big thing in this world, it irked him.

He asked instead if mother found her soulmate.

"No, she never did, and it never bothered her," he replied. "The times when the pitying looks given to her were too much, she would snap and tell them she had friends, she had a family, and she had me. She didn't need any more than that."

That was sweet, and a bit out of character if the horror stories of his mother was correct.

"She would often say this while trying to shoot them."

That's more like it.

* * *

><p>The only ones who should know about the name (beside the owner), are the parents. Which makes sense, they're the ones who see you in your naked baby glory. The ones who see you grow and mature enough to finally explain the darkening marks on the wrist. They are often the first ones who try and search for their child's soulmate, arranging play dates and taking them to festivals and parties in hopes to find the match for their child. It's a bit funny how soulmates could make all doting parents into nosy matchmakers.<p>

"How do you feel about playing with my high priest's son?" his father asked him casually, signing some document. "I hear he's one of the brightest students in his batch, you would get along with him quite well."

Nosy, nosy, nosy.

* * *

><p>They meet, it's very anticlimactic. He shrugs it off and teaches him how to play Monopoly.<p>

He doesn't notice the worried look in his father's face.

* * *

><p>He is intelligent and kind, always patient with Mana's antics and can be extremely mischievous when he's in the mood. He doesn't mind his random ideas and ramblings, doesn't mind the strange inventions he tries to create. He always listens, and is always willing to help (in fixing his failed ideas, usually).<p>

Soulmate or not, it was the start of something beautiful. Though many priests seem to disagree.

* * *

><p>"You corrupted him, both of you," his soulmate's father says weeks later, a stern look in his face. "Have some dates."<p>

Mana quickly snatches the bowl and digs in, he pops one honeyed treat in his mouth.

"Seth's balls, I thought he would be cursed to be dull and boring until he dies," the father murmurs, taking a piece and chewing thoughtfully. "Brilliant as he is, he was too much of a stickler for rules and work."

They don't mention him saying a bad word in front of children, the free candy was more than enough to keep them quiet.

* * *

><p>He realizes months later why their meeting was anticlimactic. There was no recognition in his eyes as he introduced himself (which wasn't needed, being the prince, but he was raised to be polite in both his lives). No indication of shock or delight, no realization as he said his name. Which could mean one thing.<p>

He was not the name written on his soulmate's wrist.

* * *

><p>He decides not to reveal it, what is written on his skin. He doesn't want guilt painted on his friend's face. He doesn't want an apology for something both of them never decided. He doesn't want pity. Not being his soulmate rarely bothers him anymore.<p>

He just wishes that his friend could find the person that could balance him, because it was a wonderful feeling. He wishes it wasn't a one-sided bond.

But then again, just like his mother had said, if you had friends, if you had family, if you had loved ones. Then is not finding your soulmate that big of a deal?

(while it was nice to have, was it _needed?_)

* * *

><p>As someone who once lived in a world where that concept never existed, no it was not.<p>

* * *

><p>Papa is sick and he doesn't know what to do.<p>

* * *

><p>He wonders how his father's soulmate is handling this, because he sure as hell wasn't. He holes himself up in his room, and if there are sobs, nobody questions it (or judges him for it).<p>

If someone barges in despite his orders of wanting to be alone, then nobody is there to stop them.

If someone hugs him, nobody is protesting it.

And if he cries harder, only one is there to see it.

"A soulmate is balance, they are there to ground you when you fly too high and to pull you up when you fall."

He wonders who is there to pull his father's soulmate.

* * *

><p>The first bearer of the Key steps down, giving the item to his apprentice. And while everyone else is welcoming the new high priest, another person is quietly observing the newly retired one. He looks tired, dark circles in his eyes and a gaunt look in his face. It seems like he hasn't eaten in days. He looks older, almost dead.<p>

The new king frowns, this will not do.

* * *

><p>He orders him to eat, to drink, and to rest for every god's sake your work won't run away, calm down and _**relax**_. If he had to drag him to bed or drag him out of his desk, then so be it. He was not above doing the servants' work to ensure he was taken care of.

"Take your time, you have plenty of it now," he murmurs, gently taking away the scrolls in the man's hands. "To rest, to recover, to _grieve._"

The hands twitch.

"My mother often said, with her friends, her family, and father, she didn't need any more of that," he continues. "Never forget, we'll be there to bring you down, and we'll be there to pull you up."

You have us, he implies. You have us, let it be enough.

* * *

><p>He doesn't need to order him to eat and drink anymore, this was good.<p>

* * *

><p>He forgets about the plot, about the anime. He forgets that fate

is basically the canon plot of a Japanese cartoon he had loved in his past life. With his father on the ground, sarcophagus broken and scattered in front of him, he starts to remember.<p>

He also remembers that fate _can _be an asshole.

* * *

><p>As a rule, nobody touches the king. He was considered a god, and thus be treated with respect (and awe, much to his discomfort). There were exceptions, like family, lovers, and soulmates. But everyone else could not trespass his invisible no-touch bubble. In general, he didn't like people randomly touching him, be it for hugs or handshakes. So he neither encouraged nor discouraged it. Except for Mana, who could care less about social rules and niceties if it meant not being close to her childhood friend. And his soulmate, but he was rarely the touchy-feely type.<p>

(and his father, when he was still with them)

Which was why it was a surprise to be engulfed in a hug from his high priestess.

"Forgive me, my king," she whispered. "I could not stop him."

He was going to ask who she couldn't stop until he starts to remember more. Words, flavor text from a language that has not been made (yet), flow in his mind with sudden clarity. Numbers for attack, numbers for defense, and numbers for stars. Violet robes and armor, a strange pointy hat. A monster who always exude grace and power in that show, who could be cheeky if he felt like it. The ultimate wizard in terms of attack and defense.

He remembers how that monster came to be, and the symbols on his skin begin to itch underneath his golden bracelets.

(he wonders vaguely if Isis knows, if she saw the name on his wrist from her visions, because that's the only reason why she would lose all propriety to hug her king)

* * *

><p>There is a sharp pain on his wrist, like a hot knife had sunk deep in it. Later on, he receives the Ring, but not its bearer. He stares at the solemn look the thief has, wrist throbbing painfully as he tries to make sense on how everything went wrong.<p>

It's his vizier who forces him to eat, drink, and sleep. How the tables have turned.

* * *

><p>"I guess everything's following canon, huh?" he laughs hysterically, the language so foreign on his tongue, but he can still speak it. Still as eloquently and softly like his past life, perhaps with a heavier accent. He clutches the headdress harder. "What's the point of knowing all this if I can't change a goddamn thing?!"

Screw fate, screw destiny, and screw that fucking anime.

This was his life, this was their lives, and they were more than just an interesting story to watch.

* * *

><p>Why did the thief's life change but not everything else? What happened?<p>

He was not bitter, he could never be bitter at the obvious proof that canon (fate) could be subverted. He just wanted to know how it happened, so he could do it as well.

* * *

><p>Nothing's working.<p>

* * *

><p>His wrist hurts less when he summons him, like a cooling balm has spread over the throbbing pain. Reminding him that he's still alive and here, in a way.<p>

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><p>Nothing is working.<p>

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><p>Seth's markings on his wrist is a pale blue, very contrasting on his tan skin. It burns brightly as he carries her body towards the large stone tablet of a dragon. There is dismay and grief in his eyes, and he wishes he could give him time the same way he gave his vizier years ago. But it's not an option now.<p>

"Don't pour water on it, it will only hurt more," he warns, giving a teared strip of his cape. He begins to wrap his priest's wrist. "I've found that summoning makes it hurt less."

There's realization in his cousin's eyes, and his lips turn into a familiar thin line of anger, the kind he makes when he thinks someone has harmed or insulted his king. But he ignores it to wrap the burning characters etched on Seth's skin.

* * *

><p>Nothing is working._

* * *

><p>"I guess," he breathes, giving a harsh laugh and bringing the Pendant up. "I'm going with canon for this, huh?"<p>

Fate (canon) is an asshole, but not as much of an asshole as he thought. He knows, at the very least, that his soulmate won't feel the searing burn that plagued his father's soulmate, won't feel the ever present pain that's plaguing him and his cousin. A plus on a one-sided bond, perhaps?

Perhaps.

He brings down the Pendant, smashing it hard on the floor.

And there was darkness.

* * *

><p>He drops his staff to clutch his arm, hissing softly at the sudden burning pain he was feeling. He removes the violet arm guard covering his wrist, staring at the foreign alien script etched on it. It was glowing a bright red. His stomach sinks, he never found out what this meant, and now he'll never know.<p>

Later, he'll completely forget about the pain in his wrist, shock from hearing a certain person's death numbing it.

* * *

><p>She places all of her chosen books meticulously in her bag, making sure none of the covers are folded as they're squeezed in every available space. She smiles at her handiwork, absolutely sure that her grandmother will love her surprise. She brings out a card she bought and writes a funny little note to put in, and with a stroke of her pen, signs her name with as much flourish and elegance as possible.

It will be the last time she ever writes it.

(but not the last time it will appear)

End
file.